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Fire Vandals Hit Beach Bonfire, Washington St.

By AMY ROLLINS

A series of recent fires that have plagued Washington Street residents may be related to the premature setting of last week's beach bonfire, according to Fire Chief William Harriman.

On Monday night, July 3, the bonfire which had not been lit at Saturday's beach party due to severe thunderstorms, was lit by unauthorized persons around 11 o'clock, Harriman said.

"The police were called at

about 11:15pm and the fire was really going when we got there. It was so far gone by the time the first truck got there, we just decided to let it burn. If four or five pallets had been lit, then it would have been worth it to try to save it," Harriman said.

The bonfire, built by Ed O'Donnell, was designed to collapse upon itself, burning completely and leaving no residue. "It doesn't take very long to burn, once it gets going,"

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Harriman said. "When I looked at it, I couldn't even see one pallet, it was all fire."

Fourth of July Committee Chairman Nancy Reed said she was awakened Monday night with the news. "The chief called me at about 11:45pm and said, 'Well it's lit, there's nothing we can do about it now.'"

The fire department kept trucks watching the fire at the beach until 2:30am and sent a truck to wet the rocks the fire was set on early Tuesday morning.

The beach was not the only host of fire Monday night. According to Harriman small fires were lit on the front stoops of

two Washington Street homes around 1:15am.

The fires were started by heavy paper shopping bags, like grocery bags, he said. The paper bags were filled with dog feces and lit on fire. "At one home, the fire was lit on a stone-slab type of porch. They set the fire, banged on the door and then took off," he said.

The other fire set Monday night was at a home further north on Washington St. with a wooden deck. At this home, the fire-setters did not wake the residents. "I don't know whether they made an attempt to knock or ring the bell and it didn't work or not," Harriman said.

"The fire just burned itself

out, but it burned right through the wooden steps. The residents found it the next morning," he said. "It was just luck that the fire burned out when it did. It was a very old house, and had that porch caught fire, it could have burned the whole house down. These fires are really serious, there's nothing funny about them."

Another small fire was set at the house with the stone steps on Saturday night.

Harriman said it was hard to tell if the fires on Washington Street were connected to the bonfire incident or even connected to each other.

Police said that all cases are still being investigated.